

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

April - May 2010



"If we are to have broad-thinking men and women of high mentality, of good physique and with a true perspective on life, we must allow our populace a communion with nature in areas of more or less wilderness condition."

-- Arthur Carhart

U. S. Forest Service official and pioneer
in the wilderness preservation movement



National Trails Day on the Conasauga Ranger District was another rousing success due to your dedication, tireless energy and enthusiasm. Celebrating our 18th consecutive NTD, Team Conasauga continues to "give back" year after year.



April - Right off the bat on the first day of the month **Ken Napierkowski** performed various duties of campground maintenance at Jacks River Fields Campground... **Troy and Wanda Brown** took to the wilderness for two days with their crosscut saw on the Hickory Creek Trail removing lots of blowdowns...

Amos Burrell gave of his time and energy helping the district out on a prescribed burn in the Mooneyham area of the forest... **Rick Moon** of **SORBA** spent a couple of days on the Pinhoti Trail doing trail maintenance... **Wanda Brown** did some administrative work on the volunteer database inputting names, hours, and work accomplished... **James Workman** put time in to watch over the Lake Conasauga Campground and keep the place up... The **BCHNG** consisting of **Junior Kyle, Janette Kyle, Bob Goggins, Kathleen Corcoran, Carlos Martel, Carol Martel, Hanley Rosr, and Carol Upshaw** all pitched in for a day at Jacks River Fields Campground to mow, clean restrooms and fire pits, trim brush, and caulk the restroom roof... **Tony Cook** took his crosscutting skills to the Keown Falls Trail removing blowdowns... **Fred Pilcher** our industrious volunteer on the west side of the district spent several days this month cleaning various recreation areas including trash pickup and mowing grass...our camp hosts at the Pocket Campground, **Lou and Evelyn Thompson**, looked after the place and kept it nice and clean...our volunteer workday to Beech Bottom Trail included **Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, Amos Burrell, Janet Jordan, Scott Jordan, Zack Jordan, Jim Leatherwood, Gail Milner, Tom Owens, Wayne Patillo, Jerry Phurrough, Eric Shelby, Mark Voykovic, and Nicole Warren-Miller** who all worked very hard to perform waterbar/waterdip maintenance as well as remove all the blowdowns on the trail down to the Jacks River Trail... **Mark Voykovic** patrolled the Beech Bottom/Jacks River Falls area informing hikers/backpackers of *Leave No Trace* ethics...and finally for the month, **Ken Nix** of **EMBA** went on the Pinhoti Trail to perform several hours of crosscut saw work to remove the blowdowns from the trail. A great effort of **424.75 hours** was donated by Team Conasauga for the month! Thanks TEAM for all of your hard earned accomplishments!



May 2010 – From the get-go, **Troy and Wanda Brown** started the month hitting the trail hard continuing to cut blowdowns from the Hickory Creek Trail from the Rice Camp Trailhead to Stink Creek...**Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** spent a couple of days on the horseback trail of Iron Mountain to do some trimming... a chainsaw class was held at the district office for those needing a refresher as well as those needing the initial course and was attended by **Steve Berberich, Patrick Berry, Charlie Crider, Mark Morgan, Carolyn Touryniere, Terry Williams, and Jim Holland**...much needed blowdown removal was accomplished on the East Chickamauga Trail by **Tony Cook**... **Troy and Wanda Brown** finally finished off the numerous blowdowns on Hickory Creek Trail... **Junior Kyle, Melinda Towe, Lakota Towe, Junior Kyle and Tim Chancey** of **BCHNG** over the course of two days mowed and weed-eated the Jacks River Fields Campground area as well as sprayed weeds and picked up trash making the place look spectacular...**Susan Gaddis, Veronica Nunley, and Ken Horton** of **BCHNG** spent a day cleaning up Cottonwood Patch Campground making it look nice...the volunteer workday for May saw a change in plans, however, much needed waterbar and waterdip maintenance was performed on the Hickory Creek Trail by **Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Troy and Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell, Charles Gowing, Wayne Pattillo, Andrew and Ashley Tillman, Nicole Warren-Miller and Mark Voykovic**...the camp host at Lake Conasauga Campground, **James Workman** continued to do a superb job in the upkeep of the campground...**Lou and Evelyn Thompson**, hosts at the Pocket, kept things in order with the day-to day activities in running a campground... an Eagle Scout project from the Boy Scouts led

by **Matthew Plott** along with 29 others included installing fencing and steps at the Gennett Poplar to prevent erosion and misuse of the area... **Troy Brown** took it upon himself to go back to Hickory Creek Trail to do more waterbar maintenance and the following day went to Rice



Boy Scout Troop 67 did a great job improving the Barnes Creek Picnic Area

Camp Trail to help move logs out of the trail using a mule team... a second Eagle Scout project for the month led by **Alex Tucker of Troop 67** along with 19 others did some nice work at the Barnes Creek Picnic Area installing a new picnic table, spreading fresh gravel, weedeating and trimming the area...last but not least, a third Eagle Scout project along with 19 other scouts led by **Aaron Elder of Troop 65** tore down the old wooden and concrete

benches on the Lake Conasauga Trail and installed six new, metal benches along the trail...

Fred Pilcher put in much needed time over at Johns Mountain Overlook making the place look good... **Mark Voykovic** took off on a foot patrol to Beech Bottom/Jacks River Falls over the Memorial Day holiday weekend spreading the *Leave No Trace* principles...and as no surprise, **Troy and Wanda Brown** ended the month back on the wilderness trails doing what they love, cutting blowdowns this time on Rice Camp Trail. Would you believe an absolutely incredible **1,222.25 hours** were racked up for the month!!!! Thanks to all the volunteers in making this month a huge success and improving our general forest area and trails!!!



SUN SAFETY



It's natural to enjoy all kinds of outdoor activities. The Sun Safety Alliance encourages you to be safe by following these sun-safety tips year-round to help prevent serious skin damage and possibly skin cancer...later!

- Keep in mind the sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear clothing that's dark and tightly woven.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Remember that UV rays bounce off sand, snow, concrete, and water.
- Do not use sun tanning beds.
- Keep very young children (6 months or less) out of the sun.
- Sunscreens need to be applied liberally and evenly over all exposed areas.



- Apply a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher whenever you're outdoors. To achieve adequate UV protection you should use products that provide broad spectrum protection, which means protection against both UVB and UVA rays.
- For children, the SSA recommends sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher.
- Apply sunscreen before going outdoors and reapply often.
- Reapply sunscreen after swimming, perspiring, and toweling off.
- Provide complete sunscreen coverage for your skin (including neck, ears, lips).

The Fountain of Youth

People who are active and fit in their 30s and 40s are healthier than their sedentary counterparts and generally maintain that advantage well beyond their 50s if they continue their healthy habits. Most adults begin to experience declines in cardiovascular fitness and aerobic capacity around age 45. The drop goes much faster, however, for people who are inactive, overweight, and those who smoke. "You have to exercise. It's now becoming an established fact," says Dr. Suzanne Steinbaum, a spokesperson for the American Heart Association. "If you don't incorporate it into your life, you're going to see the effects. You'll get sicker sooner."



(Source: Archives of Internal Medicine, Vol. 169, pg 178)

LEAVE NO TRACE

- ✓ **PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE**
- ✓ **TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES**
- ✓ **DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY**
- ✓ **LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**
- ✓ **MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS**
- ✓ **RESPECT WILDLIFE**
- ✓ **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS**



This newsletter issue brings us to Principle #4:

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Leave What You Find means retaining the special qualities of every wildland area – for the long term.

- **Preserve the Past.** Archeological and historical artifacts are reminders of the rich human history of a place and belong to all people for all time. Examine but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- **Leave Natural Features Undisturbed.** Load your camera, not your pack. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- **Avoid Introducing or Transporting Non-native Plant or Animal Species.** Non-native invasive species of plants, animals and organisms can cause large-scale, irreversible changes to ecosystems and eventually eliminate native species. The non-native Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is attacking the East Hemlock trees throughout the eastern U.S. You can help prevent the spread of invasive species...
 - ➔ Don't transport flowers, weeds, or aquatic plants into the National Forest.
 - ➔ Empty and clean your packs, tents, fishing equipment and other gear after every trip.
 - ➔ Clean the dirt out of your boots or tire treads.
 - ➔ Never discard or release live bait.
 - ➔ If you carry hay or other feed, make sure it's weed-free.
- **Do Not Build Structures, Furniture, or Dig Trenches.**

For more *Leave No Trace* information visit: www.lnt.org



What's in a Name: the Pulaski

The Pulaski is a tool that combines an axe head and a mattock (a sharpened hoe). It is one of the most common tools for forest firefighting, as well as for trail building and maintenance. Why is it called a “Pulaski”? It was named for its inventor – Ed Pulaski. Ed was a Ranger with the early Forest Service, and described by some as the “hero of 1910”, who developed the tool for firefighting.

Ed Pulaski created a prototype of the tool in his blacksmith shop some time before 1910. The prototype version that included a detachable shovel was shown to local Forest Service officials in 1911, but the response was lukewarm. By 1913, Pulaski had dropped the idea of including a shovel, and improved the balance of the remaining axe and mattock. He suggested the Forest Service patent the tool, though they never did...neither did Ed. He modified the design by lengthening the shaft and making the mattock narrower, and within a few years the tool as we know it today had gained enough acceptance that the Forest Service had the tool being made commercially.

So how did Ed become the “hero of 1910”? The year 1910 was a terrible one for forest fires. At one point, fires in the western states were so large that smoke clouded the sky in Atlantic-coast cities. It was the first serious test of the young Forest Service's wildfire policies and firefighting ability. In a year of devastating fires, the Northern Rockies “big blowup” of August was possibly the worst. This blowup quickly moved beyond the control of firefighters on the scene. Groups of men were pinned down or cut off by the blowup. Men would die. One fire crew was led by Ed Pulaski.

As Ed was leading his crew into the backcountry to fight the fire, the worst happened. The group was cut off by the blowup, surrounded with no way out. They would soon die. Then Ed had an idea. There were several old mine shafts in the area, and he brought his group first to one, then

another, until he found one deep enough for them all. Time was running out. He ushered the men into the mine tunnel, forcing them as far back as possible to escape the heat of the fire. They fought the flames that appeared at the mouth of the tunnel. There was nothing they could do about the smoke. Backs to the wall, several of the men panicked. They wanted to make a run for it, wanted to try, wanted – well, just wanted out of that hole. Pulaski knew that to leave the tunnel was to die, but as the smoke choked the men, it became harder to keep them from running. So, Ed pulled out his gun, and told them that the first man who tried to leave would be shot.

All the men passed out from the smoke. At least one left the tunnel before the others awoke, and walked out to tell the outside world that the others had died. It was easy to believe; all over the district, crews had been caught in the blowup and many were missing. But Ed's crew hadn't died. As the men came to, they had to pass over Ed's inert body. Someone called to those still inside, "come outside boys, the boss is dead". Ed's voice came back, "like hell he is". Ed brought his crew out.

So that's the story of the "hero of 1910", Ed Pulaski, the man who created the tool we use today. He retired from the Forest Service in 1930, and died a year later. Next time you swing a pulaski, think of "Big Ed". The common sense tool is a testament to the common sense man.

This is a condensed version of an article written by Bill Ross for the January 2004 issue of the Trail Talk newsletter. Some of Bill's information was taken from Year of the Fires by Stephen J. Pyne.

Horse Trail Assessment Update

The Conasauga Ranger District is pleased to announce the completion of its Horse Trail Assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to determine if the equestrian use opportunities were adequate to meet public demand across the District. The goal is to provide safe, high-quality trail opportunities for non-motorized uses that are environmentally and operationally sustainable.



The results of the assessment indicate:

1. The equestrian use opportunities are adequate to meet public demand over most of the District. In addition, the District is providing safe, high-quality equestrian trail opportunities that are environmentally and operationally sustainable. There are, however, some opportunities to enhance or improve equestrian use opportunities.
2. The opportunity for equestrian use on system trails in the Blue Ridge Divide Opportunity Area (far eastern side of the District) is limited, but the demand is high, which is made apparent by the extensive network of non-system trails currently being used. There may be opportunities to create loop trails with trailhead parking to enhance equestrian use in the area but further analysis is needed to determine whether or not this would be feasible based on resource and operational constraints.

What do we do with these results? First, the District will move forward with pursuing some projects that would improve or enhance equestrian use opportunities. These are listed as follows, in order of priority:

- Adopt as a system trail the existing 2-mile non-system trail which connects the Cottonwood Patch Campground to Horseshoe Bend Trailhead.
- Partner with Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association and the Conservation Fund to allow for a re-route of the Pinhoti Trail and the construction of a trailhead in the Dennis Mill area.
- Improve access to the Pinhoti Trail by improving or relocating trailhead parking areas at Strawberry Mountain, Hammond Gap, Hurricane Creek, and Dug Gap.

Second, the District will conduct a more site-specific assessment of the Blue Ridge Divide Opportunity Area to determine if we can create a multi-use trail system that meets objectives of environmental and operational sustainability.

To read the Assessment, go to: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/conf/conasauga-horse-trails-assessment>

Conasauga Bits and Pieces

- **Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference (SETC).** The Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association is hosting the SETC in Atlanta on July 15-17. This informative and fun conference is intended for trail users, land managers and anyone interested in horses and the outdoors. Several of our Backcountry Horsemen of North GA (BCHNG) friends are participating in the conference as well as Conasauga Ranger District employees Michele Jones and Larry Thomas. It's not too late to register. On line registration and additional information is available at www.southeasternequestriantrails.com.
- **Designated Campsites on the Jacks River.** The Conasauga Ranger District has begun work to designate campsites and close and rehab others on the lower Jacks River Trail in the Cohutta Wilderness from Rice Camp Trail down river to the trailhead. The action is needed to reduce the detrimental effects of campsite erosion from poorly located campsites on the water quality of the Jacks River. Upon completion, there will be 21 designated campsites on this roughly 7-mile stretch of the river.
- **Banana Peels and Leave No Trace.** We all know litter when we see it, right? Discarded gum wrappers, cigarette butts, plastic sandwich bags and the like are certainly litter. But what about banana peels and apple cores? They decompose quickly don't they? Actually, it takes at least 3-4 weeks for a banana peel to decompose. And, when is the last time you saw a banana tree or apple tree in the Wilderness? All of us need to remember to pack out everything we pack in, including banana peels and apple cores, and Leave No Trace of our visit.
- **Holly Creek Road Closure Update.** The Holly Creek Road (FS18) remains closed while a new bridge at Dill Creek is constructed. However, the Murray County Road Department reports that they hope to have the bridge completed and the road reopened within a week. Keep your fingers crossed.



Mark Your Calendars...



- **July 17** **Hickory Ridge (multi-use) Trail – trimming & slingblading. Equestrians needed.**
- **August 13-14** **Working Weekend #57, Hemptop & Penitentiary Branch (multi-use) Trails – slingblading, trimming, and blowdown removal. Car camping at the Jacks River Fields Campground. Equestrians needed.**
- **September 18** **Rough Ridge (multi-use) Trail – slingblading & water bar maintenance. Equestrians needed.**
- **October 16** **Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic.**
- **November 13** **TBA**

Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle smaller projects.

If you are interested, please contact Ed at 706-695-6736 x 118 or e-mail elang@fs.fed.us.

Team Conasauga... where every volunteer counts, and we count on every volunteer!